

REMARKS

The specification has been amended at page 7 to update the reference to the U.S. application incorporated by reference, now U.S. Patent No. 6,799,512. Note that this patent refers to stiffness S and compressibility K.

The specification has also been amended to correct a translation error wherein the German "steifigkeit" was translated as "elasticity". Note that the term was also translated as "rigidity" (a more correct choice), the translator apparently believing that the two terms are synonymous. It is believed that one skilled in the art would not only recognize the error but what the correct term is. Basis for this is founded in the aforementioned U.S. Patent No. 6,799,512, as well as U.S. Patent No. 6,105,498 cited by the Examiner.

It is believed that the amendments to the specification will make the invention easier to understand. That is, the elastic filaments in layer 4 are prestained to varying degrees as a function of axial position so that a tangential stiffness profile which varies in the axial direction results (the individual elements do not extend in the axial direction and thus cannot be prestrained in that direction). In other words, since stiffness is the inverse of elasticity, the areas of highest circumferential strain have the lowest remaining elasticity and therefore the greatest stiffness. Claim 1 has also been amended to define the invention more clearly.

Claims 1 and 2 stood rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over Vrotacoe U.S. 5,323,702 in view of Vrotacoe U.S. 6,105,498. To the extent that this rejection would be applied against claims as presently amended, such rejection is traversed for the reasons following.

Vrotacoe '702 discloses a printing blanket comprising an inner carrier sleeve and a rubber covering having a layer with compressible elements 62 or 64, and a layer with elastic

elements 80 or 94 which impart stiffness. There is no disclosure of a varying stiffness profile in the axial direction, nor any measure for achieving such a profile.

Vrotacoe '498 recognizes the desirability of varying the stiffness and/or compressibility axially, but does not suggest that this may be done by prestaining the elastic elements to varying degrees as a function of axial position. The only suggestion of how to vary stiffness as a function of position is found in Hoffmann U.S. 6,799,512, which discloses varying the stiffness as a function of diameter by varying the density of the filaments.

The claims as amended being definite and patentable over the art of record, withdrawal of the rejections and early allowance are solicited. If any objections remain, a call to the undersigned is requested.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

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